DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 354 779 FL 021 006

AUTHOR Pease-Alvarez, Lucinda
TITLE Moving In and Out of Bilingualism: Investigating Native Language Maintenance and Shift in Mexican-Descent Children. Research Report: 6.
INSTITUTION National Center for Research on Cultural Diversity and Second Language Learning, Santa Cruz, CA.
SPONS AGENCY Office of Educational Research and Improvement (ED), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE 93
CONTRACT R117G10022
NOTE 21p.
AVAILABLE FROM Dissemination Coordinator, National Center for Research on Cultural Diversity and Second Language Learning, Center for Applied Linguistics, 1118 22nd Street N.W., Washington, DC 20037 ($4).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Bilingualism; Children; *Code Switching (Language); English (Second Language); *Family Influence; Immigrants; Language Attitudes; *Language Maintenance; Language Proficiency; *Language Role; *Mexican Americans; Monolingualism; *Spanish Speaking; Surveys; Tape Recordings

ABSTRACT

A study investigated patterns and influences in Mexican-American children's Spanish language maintenance and shift toward English dominance or monolingualism. Subjects were 64 Mexican-descent children, ages 8-9, of varying immigration backgrounds (Mexican-born, U.S.-born of Mexican-born parents, U.S.-born of U.S.-born parents), and their families in one California community. Interviews and activities were conducted to investigate language proficiency, attitudes, and choices, and the children were observed and tape-recorded in everyday activities at home and at school. Preliminary findings indicate that a shift from Spanish to English is occurring across generations in language choice for home and school use. However, despite the tendency for children to have greater access to English-speaking teachers as they progress through grades, some still rely on English in academic activities with peers, suggesting an environment supportive of Spanish and of language alternation. A similar shift toward English appears in language proficiency across background groups, and interlingual dependency appears to occur only for foreign-born children with access to Spanish across a wide range of domains. Many adults want their children to be proficient in both languages. Overall, a strong commitment to bilingualism emerges, despite an intergenerational shift toward English. Bibliography and survey questions are appended. (MSE)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

RESEARCH REPORT: 6

ED354779

MOVING IN AND OUT OF BILINGUALISM: INVESTIGATING NATIVE LANGUAGE MAINTENANCE AND SHIFT IN MEXICAN-DESCENT CHILDREN

LUCINDA PEASE-ALVAREZ

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

FL021006

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Moving In and Out of Bilingualism: Investigating Native Language Maintenance and Shift in Mexican-Descent Children

LUCINDA PEASE-ALVAREZ

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SANTA CRUZ

NATIONAL CENTER FOR RESEARCH ON CULTURAL DIVERSITY AND SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING

1993

This report was prepared with funding from the Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI) of the U.S. Department of Education, under Cooperative Agreement No. R117G10022. The findings and opinions expressed here are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the positions or policies of OERI.

National Center for Research on Cultural Diversity and Second Language Learning

The National Center for Research on Cultural Diversity and Second Language Learning is funded by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement of the U.S. Department of Education to conduct research on the education of language minority students in the United States. The Center is operated by the University of California, Santa Cruz, through the University of California's statewide Linguistic Minority Research Project, in collaboration with a number of other institutions nationwide.

The Center is committed to promoting the intellectual development, literacy, and thoughtful citizenship of language minority students, and to increasing appreciation of the cultural and linguistic diversity of the American people. Center researchers from a variety of disciplines are conducting studies across the country with participants from a wide range of language minority groups in pre-kindergarten through grade 12 classrooms. Research projects deal with the relationship between first and second language learning; the relationship between cultural and linguistic factors in the achievement of literacy; teaching strategies to help children from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds gain access to content material; alternate models of assessment for language minority students; various instructional models for language minority children; and the effect of modifications in the social organization of schools on the academic performance of students from diverse backgrounds.

Dissemination is a key feature of Center activities. Information on Center research is published in two series of reports. *Research Reports* describe ongoing research, or present the results of completed research projects. They are written primarily for researchers studying various aspects of the education of language minority students. *Educational Practice Reports* discuss research findings and their practical application in classroom settings. They are designed primarily for teachers, administrators, and policy makers responsible for the education of students from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

For more information about individual research projects, or to have your name added to the mailing list, please contact:

Eugene Garcia and Barry McLaughlin, Co-Directors
National Center for Research on Cultural Diversity
and Second Language Learning
399 Kerr Hall
University of California
Santa Cruz, CA 95064

COLLABORATING INSTITUTIONS

University of California
Santa Cruz

University of California
Berkeley

University of California
Irvine

University of California
Los Angeles

University of California
San Diego

University of California
Santa Barbara

University of Arizona
Tucson

University of Oklahoma
Norman

University of Southern California
Los Angeles

Center for Applied Linguistics
Washington, DC

Technical Education Research Center
Cambridge, MA

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

A number of individuals deserve special recognition for their contributions to the research reported in this paper. I am especially indebted to the parents and children of Eastside who have participated in our interviews and data collection activities. Kenji Hakuta, my Co-principal Investigator, has been an invaluable resource at every stage of our work. Carola Cabrejos, Beth Feldman, David Whiteneck, Yuri Kuwahara, Griselda Silva, and Adam Winsler have brought creativity and incredible energy to the task of collecting, processing, and analyzing the data.

This research was supported by grants from the Linguistic Minority Research Project and the Spencer Foundation. The views reported here are entirely those of the author and are not necessarily endorsed by the funding agencies or individuals mentioned above.

Moving In and Out of Bilingualism: Investigating Native Language Maintenance and Shift in Mexican-Descent Children

Abstract

Recent research has emphasized the economic, social, and cognitive advantages available to bilinguals. Yet for many immigrant groups, bilingualism is a temporary phenomenon. Most immigrant children arrive in the United States as monolingual speakers of their native language, develop bilingualism as they acquire English, establish English-speaking households, and raise their children as English-speaking monolinguals. According to survey data, even Spanish, a language thought to be particularly enduring in the United States, seldom lasts beyond the second or third generation. Despite evidence that shift toward English is occurring for many immigrant groups, most researchers have neglected to focus on the different levels at which shift occurs, the factors that influence its development, and the course it takes during individuals' lifetimes. In an effort to address these concerns, this paper reports on research that investigates native language maintenance and shift to English among 64 Mexican-descent children and their families. Although the participants in the study live in the same suburban community, they have different immigration backgrounds (Mexican-born, U.S.-born of Mexican-born parents, U.S.-born of parents who were also born in the United States.) Data sources referred to here include a variety of interviews and activities used to investigate the participants' language proficiency, attitudes, and choices.

INTRODUCTION

A growing number of researchers in the fields of anthropology, sociology, and psychology have emphasized the positive side of living and learning in ethnic minority and immigrant communities. Bilingualism stands out as a feature that characterizes the lives of many children who live in these communities. Children who acquire two languages through their contacts and interactions in their homes, schools, and neighborhoods have access to a range of resources that are largely unavailable to monolingual English speakers. It is commonly believed that their bilingualism, if maintained, could lead to social and economic rewards. In addition, a sizable body of literature on the cognitive functioning of language minority children who are balanced bilinguals (i.e., with equal or nearly equal levels of proficiency in both their languages) suggests that bilingualism could lead to cognitive growth (Diaz, 1985; Duncan & DeAvila, 1979; Hakuta & Diaz, 1985; Kessler & Quinn, 1980). Finally, ethnographic research that focuses on the everyday lives of bilingual children, their families, and communities has provided descriptions of a rich learning milieu (e.g., Moll & Greenberg, 1990; Vasquez, Pease-Alvarez, & Shannon, in press). For example, translation, a common activity for many bilingual children from immigrant backgrounds, represents an occasion for children to enhance their metalinguistic awareness and language proficiency (Malakoff & Hakuta, 1991).

In light of the advantages associated with bilingualism and the contexts in which it is sustained and developed, many are concerned about its loss, a recurring phenomenon for most immigrant groups living in the United States (Fishman, 1966; Grosjean, 1982). While most non-English-speaking immigrant children develop bilingualism after living in this country for a few years, their children are often English-speaking monolinguals or only minimally proficient in their parents' native language. According to recent survey data, even Spanish, a language that some have described as usurping the role of English in the Southwest (Hayakawa ,1992), seldom lasts beyond the second or third generation (Lopez, 1978; Veltman, 1988). Recently there has been some evidence that the loss of Spanish also occurs at the level of the individual (Wong Fillmore, 1991). That is, some formerly bilingual children shift to using only English, regardless of setting. Such a shift may be triggered by a number of factors, including a preference for English or an actual loss of Spanish language proficiency. As Wong Fillmore (1991) has so poignantly described, communication between these children and their non-English-speaking parents may be impaired, thereby jeopardizing parents' ability to socialize and enculturate their children.

Despite the evidence that shift toward English is occurring for many Latino immigrant groups, relatively little is known about the routes that language shift may take and the level at which it occurs. Few people have carefully tracked immigrant children to study how their bilingualism develops over time and how different factors influence its development. Instead, most research has involved intergenerational studies that rely on census and archival data on self-reported language preference. As many have noted, self-report data regarding language practices and abilities do not necessarily provide an accurate picture of those practices (Blom & Gumperz, 1972; Gumperz, 1982). Another flaw in the research centers on the way language shift is defined. Most studies have focused on language choice and given little consideration to language proficiencies and attitudes. We contend that a more appropriate view of language shift takes into account its different components — which include language proficiency, language choice, and attitude toward language and the culture associated with a particular language — and the relationships that exist across these components. Although they are clearly related (for example, language choice by necessity entails sufficient proficiency in the two languages to enable choice to occur), there is evidence that these aspects of shift may also operate independently of one another. For example, Hakuta and D'Andrea (1992) found that students who were born in the United States to parents who were immigrants reported to

use mostly English. However, they had maintained as much Spanish proficiency as their counterparts who had immigrated from Mexico in the last 5 years. This finding suggests that native language proficiency is not necessarily positively correlated with the use of that language. Hakuta and D'Andrea also found that while attitudinal factors may be related to language choice, they were not related to language proficiency. In addition, they found that students with a maintenance orientation toward Spanish reported that they used it more than students with a more assimilationist view. However, these same students did not necessarily score well on tests of Spanish language proficiency.

THE METHOD

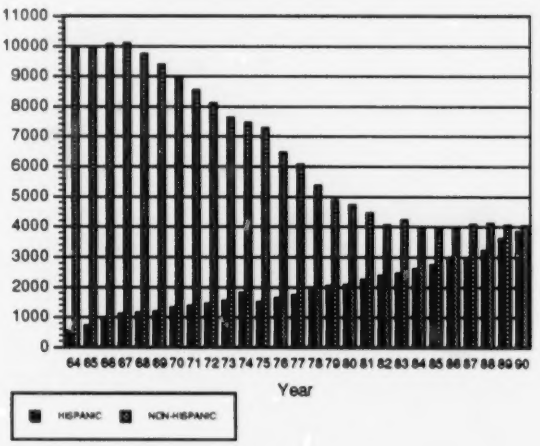
In an effort to understand better the related phenomena of native language maintenance and shift toward English at a variety of levels and over time, we have undertaken a longitudinal study of variations in the language proficiencies, choices, and attitudes of Mexican-origin children and their families. The participants in our study live in a suburban Bay Area community that we call Eastside. They include 64 8- to 9-year old children, all of Mexican descent, and their families. Parents and children have participated in interviews and activities investigating their language proficiency, attitudes, and choices. In addition, we are observing and audio-recording six of these children as they go about their everyday activities at home and at school.

In order to capture the way that generation and familial ties to the United States affect language shift, we have focused on children from the following groups or, to use our term, *depths*, which we have identified by surveying all the third graders in the four Eastside schools.

1. Born in Mexico; parents born in Mexico.
2. Born in U.S.A; parents born in Mexico; mother immigrated at age 15 or older.
3. Born in U.S.A.; parents born in Mexico; mother immigrated at age 10 or younger.
4. Born in U.S.A.; at least one parent born in U.S.A.

Most of the children participating in the study are from Depth 1 or 2 (20 per group). There are 13 children from Depth 3 and 11 from Depth 4. We attribute this difference in distribution across the four depths to two factors: (1) Mexican immigration to Eastside is fairly recent, having begun in the mid-1960s and increasing by just a few percentage points each year (See figure 1 for demographic trends in the school district that serves Eastside and a neighboring town); and (2) the majority of Mexican-descent adults living in Eastside are immigrants. In fact, fewer than 10% of the 233 Mexican-descent parents that participated in our initial survey were either born in the United States or came here as children.

Figure 1: Numbers of Hispanic and Non-Hispanic Students in the School District Serving Eastside and a Neighboring Community 1964-1990



For the 40 children in Depths 1 and 2, we have, in fact, selected our sample in pairs of siblings; that is, each of the 40 target children has a sibling counterpart. The target child is in the third grade and on average 8 years old; the sibling counterparts vary. In half of the cases, the target child is the first born, and therefore the sibling counterpart is younger. In the other half, the target child is second born, and the sibling counterpart is older. In all cases, three years or fewer separate the target child and sibling.

By comparing target children's and siblings' performances on various tasks we will be able to provide information about the nature of native language maintenance and shift to English over time within the different groups. In addition, we will be able to make statements about the effect of birth order on the maintenance and loss of bilingualism. Although to our knowledge, the role of birth order has not been the focus of studies of bilingualism, studies of language development in monolingual contexts suggest that it is an important variable (e.g., Zukow, 1989).

The six case-study children whose home and school activities are being observed and recorded include one from Depth 1, four from Depth 2, and one from Depth 3. All six of these children are members of the same neighborhood and school community. They attend classes where teachers' use of Spanish and English in the classroom varies. Three are in bilingual classes where the teachers and students use both languages, and three are in a class where the teacher relies mostly on English.

Thus far, we are just beginning to uncover findings that provide some insight into the different levels of Spanish/English bilingualism thought to be relevant to our understanding of native language maintenance and shift to English. The following account summarizes these findings as they pertain to the areas of language choice, attitudes, and language proficiency. The data sources we draw upon for this discussion include a survey of 233 Mexican-descent parents that was used to identify our sample of 64 target children and their families, semistructured and open-ended interviews with parents and children, standardized measures of the target children's English and Spanish vocabulary, and observational data focusing on the language choice practices of six case-study children in school settings.

THE COMMUNITY CONTEXT

Before proceeding with a summary of our findings to date, we would like to introduce the reader to Eastside, the community that is home to the 64 families participating in our study. Eastside is a small unincorporated area roughly 2 miles square that is part of the suburban strip that extends from San Jose to San Francisco. Like many communities in Northern California, Eastside has become increasingly diverse in income and ethnicity. In the mid-1960s, Eastside was populated mostly by working-class Anglos; now it is home to immigrants from southern Europe, the Pacific Islands, and Latin America. Among these groups, immigrants from Mexico are the most numerous and along with other Latinos represent more than 80% of the school-age population in each of Eastside's four elementary schools.

Although Eastside is more than 500 miles north of the Mexican Border, Mexican culture and the Spanish language are prevalent throughout the community. The streets are alive with commercial and social activity reminiscent of Mexican towns; Spanish is commonly used throughout its commercial and residential sectors; and Mexican traditions are an important feature of everyday life. Community members maintain strong ties with Mexico. Many make yearly visits to Mexico to be reunited with family and friends. For others, their connections with Mexico fulfill needs that cannot be met in the United States. They return to Mexico for medical care or other professional services because they find them more affordable and trustworthy than those available to them in Eastside and its immediate vicinity. Some parents who are dissatisfied with the education offered in Eastside schools have sent their children to schools in Mexico.

Many outsiders, particularly Anglos from neighboring communities, view Eastside as an enclave of monolingual Spanish speakers. They believe that the Mexican-Americans of Eastside are not interested in learning English or adapting to so-called American culture. Our interviews with Eastsiders provide a different view. Every parent we have spoken to has expressed a desire to learn English. Most feel that their own economic security and hope for a better life are strongly linked to their eventual acquisition of the language. All agree that their

children need to speak, read, and write English well. No one is operating under the illusion that their children will be able to lead an economically productive life in the United States as monolingual speakers of Spanish.

Despite the prevalence of Spanish in the home and neighborhood, in Eastside schools, English is emphasized for instructional purposes. An important goal of the district's bilingual education program is to prepare children to participate successfully in English-only classrooms. This entails providing children with initial literacy and content area instruction in Spanish. Once children are deemed proficient in English and have achieved minimal competency on standardized achievement tests administered in Spanish, they are usually placed in classes taught by teachers who speak little or no Spanish. In our observations and participation in these classes, we have noticed that many children draw upon both of their languages as they engage in various classroom activities.

RESULTS

Because we are still in the midst of data collection and analysis, the following section represents a preliminary discussion of our findings. Both qualitative and quantitative approaches were employed to capture different aspects of the participants' bilingualism. Figure 2 provides a summary of the data collection strategies used to investigate native language maintenance and shift toward English at the levels of language proficiency, language choice, and language attitudes. Thus far, surveys and interviews have been the primary data sources used to capture children's language choices and attitudes. In the initial survey used to identify our sample, we asked 233 Eastside parents to identify the language used at home among adults, between children and adults, and among children. Interviews with the target children and their parents focused on language choices in greater depth and on their attitudes toward English and Spanish (see the Appendix for a partial list of interview questions). Interviewers used probes to get at respondents' reasons for their responses. In addition, a series of open-ended questions elicited participants' perspectives on native language loss and their views about the relationships that exist between culture and language, and the role that English and Spanish should play in school. Three fluent Spanish speakers, including two native speakers, conducted the interviews, and in most cases Spanish was used during the entire interview by both interviewer and interviewee. Throughout this paper, excerpts from the interviews are included to help describe trends in our findings. It is important that the reader realize that when we attribute a quote to a particular individual, the name used is a pseudonym.

We have relied on four data sources to learn about the language proficiencies of the children: (1) the *Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (PPVT)* in both English and Spanish, (2) children's and parents' self-reports about children's proficiency in both languages, (3) a task that elicits narratives from the children, and (4) a translation and language awareness task. Because we have not yet completed our analysis of the latter two tasks, this paper focuses on results from only the first two activities.

Apart from the initial survey data, our quantitative analysis is based on findings from a total of 55 children. As indicated in Figure 3, the majority of these children are from Depths 1 and 2. Although we have identified a total of 24 children who fit the criteria for Depths 3 and 4, we are still in the process of collecting data from these children and their parents. Because we are currently undertaking a detailed content analysis of our qualitative data, we can only report on patterns and themes that are emerging from open-ended interview questions and our observations of the six case-study children.

Figure 2: Data Sources Used to Investigate Children's Native Language Maintenance and Shift to English.

Language Proficiency

Standardized vocabulary tests: *Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test* (English and Spanish versions)
Narrative task
Translation task
Self-reported data of children's language proficiency

Language Choice

Initial survey used to identify sample (administered to 233 parents of third graders)
Parent and child interviews
Classroom observations of six case-study children

Language Attitudes

Parent and child interviews

Figure 3: Distribution of Subjects Across Depths

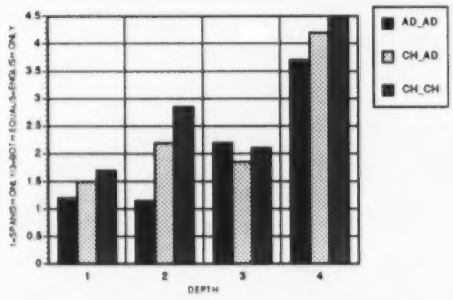
Depth 1	20
Depth 2	20
Depth 3	11
Depth 4	4

Depth 1: Born in Mexico, parents born in Mexico
Depth 2: Born in USA, parents born in Mexico, mother immigrated at age15 or older
Depth 3: Born in USA, parents born in Mexico, mother immigrated at age 10 or younger
Depth 4: Born in USA, at least one parent born in USA

Language Choice

In our initial survey of 233 parents, summarized in Figure 4, adults reported that they speak mostly Spanish with one another at home, even in second and third generation families. They also reported that their children, even those in the second and third generations, still speak some Spanish with their parents. Nevertheless, both our survey and interview data reveal evidence of a shift toward English in the home language use practices of the children. According to children's reports of their language choices, shown in Figure 5 (page 6), children in Depths 1 and 2 use mostly Spanish with parents. In contrast, there is a marked increase in the amount of English that children use with parents between Depths 2 and 3. English usage also increases between siblings across depths. When taking birth order into consideration, it is interesting to note that first born children use more English with their closest sibling and more Spanish with their younger siblings. Second born children use a great deal of English with their older sibling and more Spanish with their younger siblings. Similar findings were recently reported by Saville-Troike (1992) for children from a variety of language backgrounds.

Figure 4: Initial Parent Survey of Language Choice Patterns in the Home



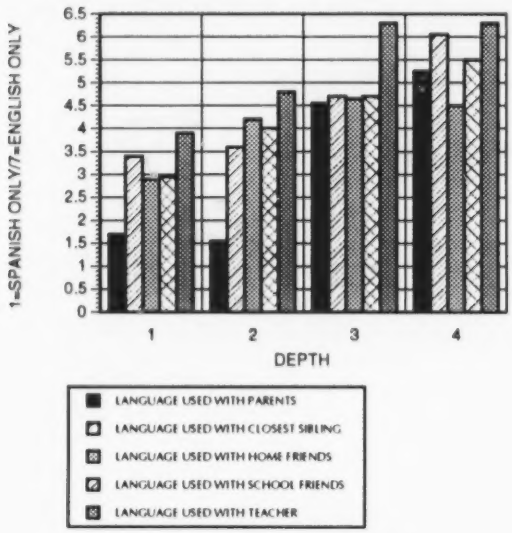
Note: CH_CH: among children; CH_AD: between children and adults; AD_AD: among adults

Children also report a shift toward English in their language use practices at school. As shown in Figure 5, our interviews with children reveal that the amount of English used with teachers increases as depth in the United States increases. Despite this trend, we have observed many of the children using Spanish at school when interacting with other children.

Although the self-report data reveal a shift toward English in the language choice practices of children, we have observed that the case-study children frequently rely on both languages as they negotiate a range of classroom tasks in collaboration with their teacher and other students. One recurring theme in all three classrooms where we are conducting our observations is the use of one language to support children's reading or writing in the other.

Frequently, children will use Spanish when discussing something that they are reading or writing in English or vice versa. We have also observed teachers use English when talking about what children have written or read in Spanish. For example, during student-teacher writing conferences, a routine event in many classrooms, teachers may use English when asking questions or making suggestions about stories, essays, or poems that students have written in Spanish.

Figure 5: Children's Self-Report of Language Choices



The two languages are woven throughout the school day in other ways. Children routinely translate for one another and their teachers. During the 10- to 15-minute event that concludes writing time in one classroom we are observing, children read what they have written aloud to the entire class. Those who share their writing in Spanish later translate for the handful of classmates who do not understand Spanish. These translations are done on the spot with little or no previous preparation. Some translations are accomplished jointly by two or more children.

When providing reasons for their language choices, children usually refer to the language proficiency or language choice of their interlocutor or to that person's ethnicity. For some children, these two themes are related. As is evident in the following excerpt from our interview, Miguel refers to his father's language and ethnicity when providing a reason for his decision to use Spanish with him.

Interviewer:	¿Por qué piensas que usas todo el tiempo español con tu papá?
Miguel:	Porque él también casi no sabe decir, no sabe hablar inglés.
Interviewer:	Entonces casi no sabe hablar inglés él?
Miguel:	Es que toda mi familia es de México.

[**Interviewer:**	Why do you think you always use Spanish with your father?
Miguel:	Because he hardly knows how to say, he doesn't know how to speak English.
Interviewer:	Then he hardly knows how to speak English?
Miguel:	It's that all of my family is from Mexico.]

Children revealed their understanding of the connections between language and ethnicity in other parts of our interview. Many feel that ethnicity or country of origin plays an important role in determining one's language choice. They know that English is the language of the United States and that Spanish is the language of Mexico. From their vantage point, most residents of the United States must learn English regardless of their ethnic background. Nevertheless, only a few children told us that English is the more important language.

Attitudes Toward Bilingualism and Native Language Maintenance

During our interviews, children and parents across depths voiced very positive attitudes toward bilingualism (see Figures 6 and 7). As they see it, bilingualism will lead to economic security, to the ability to communicate and interact with a wide range of people, and to access to knowledge sources both inside and outside of their immediate community. They are aware of the immediate advantages associated with having children who are able to translate for adult family members so that they can communicate with monolingual English speakers. For some

children, the desire to take on the role of family translator is part of what motivates them to learn English. Maria makes this clear in the following excerpt from our interview.

Interviewer: ¿Por qué es muy importante para ti hablar inglés bien?

Maria: Porque cuando una persona llama o viene de visita y le dice a mi mamá algo y ella no sabe, entonces yo le puedo decir que quiere.

[**Interviewer:** Why is it very important for you to speak English well?

Maria: Because when a person calls or comes to visit and tells my mother something and she doesn't understand, then I can tell her what (that person) wants.]

Figure 6: Children's Attitudes Toward Spanish, English, and Bilingualism

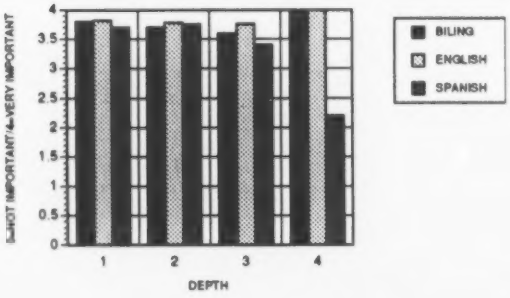
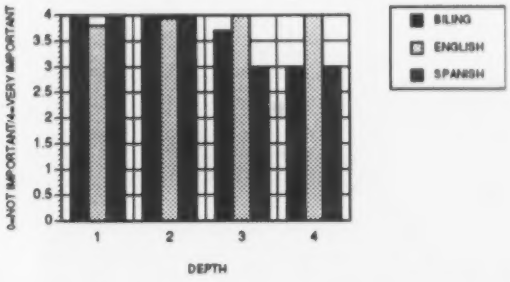


Figure 7: Parents' Attitudes Toward Spanish, English, and Bilingualism



Our interviews have revealed that parents are committed to the maintenance of Spanish and advocate its use to varying degrees in their homes. Most are confident that their children will not lose Spanish, although they can provide examples of other children who are no longer proficient in Spanish or who no longer want to use it. When asked to consider how they would feel if they had a child who no longer spoke Spanish, many parents displayed strong emotional reactions that revealed the depth of their commitment to their Mexican roots and, in some cases, the difficulties that they have had adjusting to life in the United States. For example, Mrs. Carroza spoke about how the loss of Spanish on the part of her children or their refusal to use it would eliminate her hope that they return to Mexico or maintain ties with her family.

> Pues sería difícil en mi familia si ellos agarran el inglés ajeno y olvidar el español. Será difícil en mi familia . . . . Tal vez pasará porque cuando yo les digo . . . "cuando ustedes estén grandes yo voy a regresar a mi país," luego me dicen, "Te vas a ir tú, mamá, porque nosotras no nos vamos." Es difícil porque ellas se criaron en otro ambiente y no quieren regresar.
>
> ---
>
> [Well it would be difficult in my family if they learn English and forget Spanish. It would be difficult in my family. . . . Perhaps it will happen because when I tell them. . . "When you are grown I'm going to go back to my country," they tell me, "You're going to go (alone) Mama because we aren't going." It's difficult because they were raised in another environment and don't want to return.]

Despite their commitment to Spanish in the home, parents do not agree about the role Spanish should play at school. Most are grateful to have their children enrolled in bilingual classes where teachers use Spanish when giving directions and explanations. A few parents have expressed the less common opinion that Latino children should have access to Spanish instruction throughout their elementary school careers to combat the loss of that language. As one mother reasoned:

> El inglés lo van a ir aprendiendo. Me preocupa más el español--que se les olvide. O sea que lo practican bien en escritura, en dictado, y en lectura porque cuando pasan a quinto, sexto grado casi no les van a dejar en español. Entonces yo quiero que adquieran muy buenas bases en español como están haciendo allí (en la escuela).

[They'll learn English. What worries me more is Spanish--that they will forget it. Or that they use it correctly when writing, when doing dictation, and when reading because when they go on to fifth and sixth grade they aren't going to let them use Spanish. So I want them to acquire a strong foundation in Spanish like they are doing there (at their school).]

Others worry about the instruction available to their children in bilingual programs and classrooms. They are concerned that their children are being taught by teachers who are, in most cases, nonnative speakers of Spanish and who are not proficient in that language or, to use their words, speak "un español mocho" (beginner's Spanish). These parents would rather have their children's Anglo teachers use English and not Spanish, a language they feel teachers should speak well or not at all. Some parents feel that they, not their children's Anglo teachers, should be responsible for making sure that their children maintain Spanish. For them, schools should be places where teachers use English to instruct students in the various content areas and in English. They worry that their children will not learn English if they are in bilingual classes where teachers and students use English. As evident in the following, they feel that their children, who already know Spanish, should be in an instructional setting where more attention is placed on their weaker language, English.

Deberían de practicar más inglés en la escuela porque casi saben todo el español. Entonces lo que necesitan es el inglés. Tengo mucho interés en que lo aprendan. Me gustaría que aprendan pronto. Mis hermanos tienen muchos años aprendiendo inglés y lo han aprendido escuchando puro inglés.

[They should practice more English at school because they know Spanish. So what they need is English. I'm very interested in having them learn it. I would like them to learn soon. My brothers have spent many years learning English and they have learned listening to only English.]

In a few cases, parents who long for the rigor of a Mexican education expressed their disappointment with the level of instruction offered in Eastside schools. As Mrs. Alvarez explained:

Es la opinión de la mayoría de la gente aquí que allí (en México) van más adelante en los conocimientos de la historia, en las matemáticas. Es la creencia que aquí lo que enseñan en el high school, en México lo han enseñado en tercer o cuarto grado.

[Most people here think that children there (in Mexico) are more advanced in history, in mathematics. It's the belief that what is taught in high school here is taught in the third or fourth grade in Mexico.]

Interestingly, Mrs. Barraza has just the opposite view. She feels that the schooling she received in a rural Mexican school is inferior to that offered in the Eastside school her children are attending. In our interviews, she recalls attending overcrowded schools, days when school was canceled because teachers were absent, a scarcity of books and materials, and a school day that lasted only a few hours. Mrs. Marti, who also attended a rural school in Mexico, shares Mrs. Barraza's preference for Eastside schools. She feels that teachers who work in Eastside schools, unlike the teachers she had as a student in Mexico, treat all students equally.

Aquí son parejos... y aquí van más avanzados que allá. Allá no tienen computadoras. Varias cosas que tienen aquí no tienen allá. . . . Aquí mis hijos están bien.

[Here they are fair... and here they progress more rapidly than there. There they don't have computers. There are a lot of things they have here that they don't have there.... Here my children are fine.]

A small minority of parents, particularly those with stronger ties to the United States, from Depths 3 and 4, also voiced their concerns about bilingual education in ways that are reminiscent of other opponents to this educational approach (see, e.g., Porter, 1990). They question the use of bilingual education in a country where English, after all, is the common language. They feel that schools should concentrate on using English with Spanish-speaking children. As one mother who was born in Eastside told us:

Teachers should focus on the English just because I think they tend to speak too much Spanish to the Spanish-speaking. They get lazy and they want to go the easy way which is the one they understand which is Spanish. I think that loses [confuses] them too sometimes in their English and their academics.

Another mother's problems with the use of Spanish in schools stems in part from her belief that schools and society at large do too much to make Latinos feel comfortable in the United States. She feels that too many resources are spent on making sure they have access to instruction and public services in Spanish.

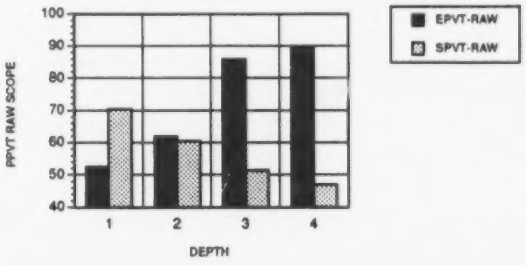
> I was very upset with the fact that we cater to, even though I am Spanish, to a lot of Spanish speaking. And it used to bug me. They need to speak English. Why should we have to convert to Spanish, to you know, to pacify them? We go to Mexico and they're not going to sit there and have things in English for us. It's good to know that the schools are teaching the kids English. But the parents and adults are having the kids translate for the adults. And it really upset me the fact that they aren't putting effort into learning English. And now it's almost like we have to learn to speak Spanish because of the way it is now. And sometimes I think it's not right. . . . It's good to know two languages but when you have to do it because of a job and you have to do it because there are a lot of Spanish speakers. "Oh you need to speak Spanish because we have to cater to Spanish too." Well I don't think that's fair.

Language Proficiency

As shown in Figure 8, findings from the *PPVT* indicate a shift in the language proficiency of children toward English. As children across depths gain proficiency in English, they appear to decline in their level of Spanish proficiency. Interestingly, first born children and second born children do not differ significantly with respect to their Spanish proficiency, although second born children are more proficient in English than first born children.

The relationship between Spanish and English proficiency interacts with depth. There is a strong and positive relationship for Depth 1, but no relationship for Depth 2. Why interlingual dependency, a concept that has received considerable attention in the research on bilingual education, may hold true only for foreign born children is open to speculation. Perhaps their experience with Spanish in Mexico in both the larger cultural context and at school has provided Mexican-born children with a stronger linguistic and academic foundation than that available to Mexican-descent children born in the United States. If we accept the view that these children's English proficiency is primarily an indicator of the learning of academic language skills at school, the lack of relationship between Depth 2 children's English and Spanish *PPVT* scores may mean that variance in native language for this group is not related to the more academic uses of Spanish, but rather to sociolinguistic circumstances such as the extent to which they are exposed to Spanish.

Figure 8: Children's Performance on the English and Spanish Versions of the *Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test*



Parents' and children's ratings of children's proficiency in English and Spanish using a seven-point likert scale also reflect a shift toward English. Although most children from all depths report themselves to be quite proficient in Spanish, there is a decrease in their reported proficiency across depths. In contrast, self-reported English proficiency increases steadily with increasing depth in the United States, and even recent immigrant children report being somewhat competent in English. Parent reports of their children's proficiency in Spanish are, like the children's, quite favorable, even in second generation families of children who obtained very low scores on the Spanish *PPVT*. This discrepancy between parents' reports and children's Spanish *PPVT* scores suggests that parents overestimate their children's language proficiency in Spanish, or that they base their judgment on different aspects of language proficiency than those measured by the *PPVT*. We are currently exploring these hunches through a more careful comparison of self-report and *PPVT* data, and through informal interviews that focus on parents' definitions of language proficiency.

CONCLUSION

Preliminary findings from our survey and interview data provide evidence that a shift from Spanish to English is occurring across generations at the level of language choice in the domains of home and school. When we look more closely at the language use practices of case-study children in the school domain, things are not nearly so straight forward. Despite the tendency for children to have greater access to English-speaking teachers as they progress through the grades, some still rely on Spanish while engaged in academic activity with their peers. No doubt, the way instruction is organized in these classrooms and the attitudes of the teachers help provide a context that is supportive of Spanish and of language alternation. Small-group activities, child-centered approaches to instruction, and positive attitudes toward Spanish and native language maintenance may be significant features of that context.

A similar shift toward English across the depths appears to be occurring at the level of language proficiency as well. Moreover, there is evidence that interlingual dependency holds true only for those foreign born children who have had access to Spanish across a wide range of domains. Thus, contrary to what certain opponents of bilingual education and proponents of the English-only movement have argued (e.g., Porter, 1990), it is not the case that the Mexican-origin population of this predominantly immigrant community is not learning English. By the second generation, children seem to be fairly proficient in English. Unfortunately, their level of Spanish proficiency appears to decline across generations.

Thus far, the data on language attitudes and explanations regarding children's language choice reveal that many Eastsiders have an additive view of bilingualism. They want their children to be proficient in both of their languages. For them, learning English should not infringe on children's abilities in Spanish. The goal is to know both languages well. They do, however, differ in regard to who is responsible for making sure that children maintain their native language while learning English. Some feel this should be the domain of both home and school, whereas others feel that Spanish language maintenance is solely the role of the family.

Overall, we are left with a picture of a community with a strong commitment to bilingualism, despite evidence of intergenerational shift toward English at the level of usage and language proficiency. As language educators interested in the development and maintenance of bilingualism, we urge Eastside schools to build on this commitment by demonstrating that classrooms can be places where children use and develop both English and Spanish. Organizing instruction to encourage children to use Spanish as well as English for academic purposes throughout the grade levels would be one way to achieve this goal. Now, most Eastside children are enrolled in classes staffed by Spanish-speaking teachers in the lower grades. Grouping arrangements that provide all students with some access to teachers who use Spanish and who ask that children use Spanish when reading, writing, and talking may, in the long run, enhance children's proficiency in that language.

At this point in time, our study only begins to touch upon the complexities of language shift in the Eastside community. Once we are further along in our data analysis, we will be able to make more definitive comparisons across the different levels of language shift. Also, because the study spans a period of three years, we will eventually be in a better position to address the issue of native language maintenance and shift toward English within generations. Additional data from the children's siblings will provide additional information about the nature of these phenomena within generations. Finally, much of the data we refer to here was elicited through interviews and therefore allows for inferences only about self-reported language use. As we continue our work observing case-study children across a variety of settings, we will be able to provide a description of variations in their language use practices.

REFERENCES

Blom, J. P., & Gumperz, J. (1972). Social meaning in linguistic structures: Code switching in Norway. In J. Gumperz & D. Hymes (Eds.), *Directions in sociolinguistics* (pp. 407-434). New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston.

Diaz, R. M. (1985). Bilingual cognitive development: Addressing three gaps in current research. *Child Development, 56,* 1376-1388.

Duncan, S. E., & DeAvila, E. A. (1979). Bilingualism and cognition: Some recent findings. *NABE Journal, 4,* 15-50.

Fishman, J. (1966). *Language loyalty in the United States.* The Hague: Mouton.

Grosjean, F. (1982). *Life with two languages.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Gumperz, J. (1982). *Discourse strategies.* New York: Cambridge University Press.

Hakuta, K., & D'Andrea, D. (1992). Some properties of bilingual maintenance and loss in Mexican background high school students. *Applied Linguistics, 13 (1),* 72-99.

Hakuta, K., & Diaz, R. M. (1985). The relationship between degree of bilingualism and cognitive ability: A critical discussion and some new longitudinal data. In K.E. Nelson (Ed.), *Children's language, volume 5* (pp. 319-344). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.

Hayakawa, S. I. (1992). The case for official English. In J. Crawford (Ed.), *Language loyalties: A source book on the official English controversy* (pp. 94-100). Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Kessler, C., & Quinn, M. E. (1980). Positive effects of bilingualism on science problem-solving abilities. In J. E. Alatis (Ed.), *Current issues in bilingual education* (pp. 295-308). Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press.

Lopez, D. (1978). Chicano language loyalty in an urban setting. *Sociology and Social Research, 62,* 267-278.

Malakoff, M., & Hakuta, K. (1991). Translation skill and metalinguistic awareness in bilingual children. In E. Bialystock (Ed.), *Language processing and language awareness by bilingual children* (pp. 141-166). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Moll, L., & Greenberg, J. (1990). Creating zones of possibilities: Combining social context for instruction. In L. Moll (Ed.), *Vygotsky and education: Instructional implications and applications of sociohistorical psychology* (pp. 319-348). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Porter, R.P. (1990). *Forked tongue: The politics of bilingual education.* New York: Basic Books.

Saville-Troike, M. (1992, March). The influence of L2 learning on L1 development. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Association of Applied Linguistics, Seattle, WA.

Vasquez, O. A., Pease-Alvarez, L., & Shannon, S. M. (in press). *Pushing boundaries: Language socialization in a Mexican-immigrant community.* New York: Cambridge University Press.

Veltman, C. (1988). *The future of the Spanish language in the United States.* New York and Washington, DC: Hispanic Policy Development Project.

Wong Fillmore, L. (1991) When learning a second language means losing the first. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 6,* 323-346.

Zukow, P.G. (Ed.) (1989). *Sibling interaction across cultures: Theoretical and Methodological Issues.* New York: Springer-Verlag.

APPENDIX

A PARTIAL LIST OF INTERVIEW QUESTIONS USED WITH PARENTS AND CHILDREN

Note: For each question, various probes were used to encourage children and parents to explain and expand on their answers.

Questions used with children

1. When you talk to your (mother, father, sibling,friend, teacher, principal) what language do you use?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
only Spanish	almost all Spanish	mostly Spanish	both equally	mostly English	almost all English	only English

Note: For questions beginning "How important...?" the following scale was used:

0	1	2	3	4
not important	of little importance	somewhat important	important	very important

2. How important is it for you to be bilingual/use two languages?

3. How important is it for you to be able to speak English well?

4. How important is it for you to speak Spanish well?

5. Which language do you like to use more—Spanish or English?

6. Do you think that one language is more important than the other? Which one?

7. Now I'd like you to imagine yourself all grown up. If you had children, how important would it be for you that they learn Spanish?

8. If you had children, how important would it be for you that they learn English?

9. Do you think everybody should know Spanish? Who doesn't need to know Spanish?

10. How important is it for you that your teacher know Spanish?

11. How important is it for you that your mother know Spanish?

12. How important is it for you that the principal know Spanish?

13. Do you think everybody should know English? Who doesn't need to know English?

Note: If responses to questions 14, 15, and 16 are different from responses to questions 10, 11, and 12, respectively (how important it is to know Spanish), ask interviewee to explain the difference.

14. How important is it for you that your teacher know English?

15. How important is it for you that your mother know English?

16. How important is it for you that the principal know English?

17. Are there any times when you feel uncomfortable/don't like using Spanish? When? Tell me about a time when you felt uncomfortable using Spanish (elicit specific example).

18. Are there any times when you feel uncomfortable/don't like using English? When? Tell me about a time when you felt uncomfortable using English (elicit specific example).

Questions used with parents

1. When you talk to your (name of husband, child, other family members) what language do you use?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
only Spanish	almost all Spanish	mostly Spanish	both equally	mostly English	almost all English	only English

2. When your (husband, child, other family member) talks with you, what language does (he/she) use?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
only Spanish	almost all Spanish	mostly Spanish	both equally	mostly English	almost all English	only English

3. How important is it to you that your child be bilingual? How does or will being bilingual benefit your child?

4. How do you think your child would respond to the previous question?

5. How important is it to you that your child know how to speak English well?

6. How important is it to you that your child know how to speak Spanish well?

7. Which language do you think your child prefers to use—English or Spanish?

8. Do you feel one language is more important than the other? Which one?

   What do you think your child thinks? Does he/she think one language is more important than the other? Which language?

9. How important is it to you that your child's teachers know how to speak Spanish?

10. How important is it to you that the principal of your child's school know how to speak Spanish?

11. Do you think that everyone who lives in the United States should speak English?

12. Do you think that the parents of Spanish-speaking children should help their children learn English? How can they help them? Are there things that you do to help your child learn English?

13. Do you think that the parents of Spanish-speaking children/Latino children should help their children maintain their Spanish? How can they help them maintain their Spanish? Are there things that you do to help your child maintain his/her Spanish? What?

14. Do you think that your child's teachers should emphasize one language more than the other in the classroom? In other words, should they spend more time using and teaching one language than the other? Which language should they emphasize/focus on?

15. Do you think your child should be taught at school in Spanish?

16. Is Spanish used at your child's school? Is instruction given in Spanish? What do you think about this? Do you think your child benefits from Spanish instruction? How? Do you think using Spanish for instruction harms your child in any way? How?

17. Some people feel that Latino children are losing their Spanish. Do you think that this is happening?

18. Do you know a child who has lost his/her Spanish? Who (prompt for details)? How did this begin? Why do you think this child has lost his/her Spanish?

19. How do you feel about this?

20. How would you feel if your child lost his/her Spanish? Do you think that will happen?

21. Is there something that parents can do to avoid the loss of Spanish in their children? What?

22. Is there anything that the schools can do to avoid the loss of Spanish in Latino children? What?

RESEARCH REPORTS

RR 1 *Sociological Foundations Supporting the Study of Cultural Diversity* (1991)
Hugh Mehan

RR 2 *The Instructional Conversation: Teaching and Learning in Social Activity* (1991)
Roland G. Tharp & Ronald Gallimore

RR 3 *Appropriating Scientific Discourse: Findings from Language Minority Classrooms* (1992)
Ann S. Rosebery, Beth Warren & Faith R. Conant

RR 4 *Untracking and College Enrollment* (1992)
Hugh Mehan, Amanda Datnow, Elizabeth Bratton, Claudia Tellez, Diane Friedlaender & Thuy Ngo

RR 5 *Mathematics and Middle School Students of Mexican Descent: The Effects of Thematically Integrated Instruction* (1992)
Ronald W. Henderson & Edward M. Landesman

RR 6 *Moving In and Out of Bilingualism: Investigating Native Language Maintenance and Shift in Mexican-Descent Children* (1993)
Lucinda Pease-Alvarez

EDUCATIONAL PRACTICE REPORTS

EPR 1 *The Education of Linguistically and Culturally Diverse Students: Effective Instructional Practices* (1991)
Eugene E. Garcia

EPR 2 *Instructional Conversations and Their Classroom Application* (1991)
Claude Goldenberg

EPR 3 *Language Minority Education in the United States: Implications of the Ramirez Report* (1992)
Courtney B. Cazden

EPR 4 *Rating Instructional Conversations: A Guide* (1992)
Robert Rueda, Claude Goldenberg & Ronald Gallimore

EPR 5 *Myths and Misconceptions about Second Language Learning: What Every Teacher Needs to Unlearn (1992)*
Barry McLaughlin

To order copies of these reports, please write or call:

Dissemination Coordinator
National Center for Research on Cultural Diversity
and Second Language Learning
Center for Applied Linguistics
1118 22nd Street N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20037
202-429-9292

THE NATIONAL CENTER FOR
RESEARCH ON
CULTURAL DIVERSITY AND
SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING
399 KERR HALL
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
SANTA CRUZ, CA 95064
PHONE: (408) 459-3500
FAX: (408) 459-3502

recycled paper